

## ROLE OF LEPA KALPANA IN MODERN COSMETIC INDUSTRY

Sreeni S<sup>1</sup>, Roshy Joseph C<sup>2\*</sup>, Parthasarathi PS<sup>3</sup>

1. III Year BAMS, Govt. Ayurveda Medical College & Hospital, Kottar, Nagercoil, Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, India.
2. Assistant Professor, Dept. of Rasa Shastra and Bhaishajya Kalpana, Govt. Ayurveda Medical College & Hospital, Kottar, Nagercoil, Kanyakumari, Tamil Nadu, India.
3. Professor & H.O.D., Dept. of Rasa Shastra and Bhaishajya Kalpana, Mannam Ayurveda Co-Operative Medical College, Pandalam, Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India.

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### Abstract

The eternal thirst and quest of humanity is beauty. Skin disorders, the curse of beauty can be alleviated by lepas, a form of external therapeutic modality in Ayurveda. A compilation of lepa; its definition, types, pharmacological actions, merits and demerits are penned in this article. Mukhalepa, Anulepa and their indications are elaborated. The therapeutic lepas that are recommended for skin disorders like Acne, hair problems, cosmetic treatment of scar tissue are discussed here. The need for the propagation of Ayurvedic wisdom is also emphasized.

**Keywords:** Lepas; Complexion; Acne; Hair problems; Wrinkles; Striae gravidarum.

### \*Address for correspondence:

Dr. Roshy Joseph C, M.D., Ph.D. (Ayu)  
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Rasa Shastra and Bhaishajya Kalpana,  
Govt. Ayurveda Medical College & Hospital,  
Kottar, Nagercoil, Kanyakumari,  
Tamil Nadu, India – 629 002.  
E-mail: [himaroshy@gmail.com](mailto:himaroshy@gmail.com)

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## INTRODUCTION

The eternal thirst and quest of humanity is beauty. Good looks is an essential requirement for fittest in modern society. Men and Women spend their wealth and time for looking good. The skin problems like Acne, dark skin and hair problems like hair loss, dandruff and aging signs like wrinkle are feared as blemishes of good looks. This fear is the foundation stone of cosmetic industry. Cosmetologists strive to eradicate these problems with the resources and knowledge available to them. Ayurveda a time tested ancient system of medicine not only provides remedies for diseases, but also has a rich archive for cosmetic formulations. Lepa kalpa a unique form of external medicine with its localized action skirts the side effects of modern systemic therapy.

### Overview of lepa

#### *Lepa - Definition*

The word Lepa is derived from the root word “Lip”, which means “to smear” or “to anoint”. Lepas are defined as medicines in paste form used for external applications.

#### *Lepa - Types*

Lepas can be prepared from both fresh drugs as well as dry drugs. Susrutha<sup>[3]</sup> has given a systematic classification of lepa based on the thickness. (Figure 1)

## LEPAS IN SKIN DISORDERS

Beauty is skin deep. Just like face is the index of mind, skin is the index of health. Healthy skin without any blemishes is a confidence booster, which is the need of the hour. Various Ayurvedic lepas which are helpful is alleviating skin disorders and promoting healthy skin are enumerated.

### *Lepas - Improving Complexion*

A glowing face reflects overall wellness. Complexion enhancing lepas are referred as Varnya lepas in classical Ayurvedic texts. The lepas are enlisted in Table 1.

### *Mukhalepa Drugs in different seasons*

There are few combination of drugs mentioned in Ayurveda in the name of mukhalepa (face pack) that help to improve complexion of the face (Table 2). Vaghbatta<sup>[2]</sup> has mentioned these complexions improving lepas as one of the types of lepa. He has mentioned different drugs to be used in different seasons taking into consideration the effect of the environment on skin. In persons habituated to mukhalepa, the vision becomes perfect, face will never be gloomy and it will become smooth resembling lotus flower (A. H. Su. 22/22)<sup>[2]</sup>. (Table 2)

### *Mukhalepa -Bhaisajyaratnaavali*

Appreciation of one’s outlook with naturally beautiful phenomena is always well received by everyone. In Bhaisajyaratnaavali<sup>[5]</sup> the author emphasizes the effect of lepa with various analogies (Table 3)

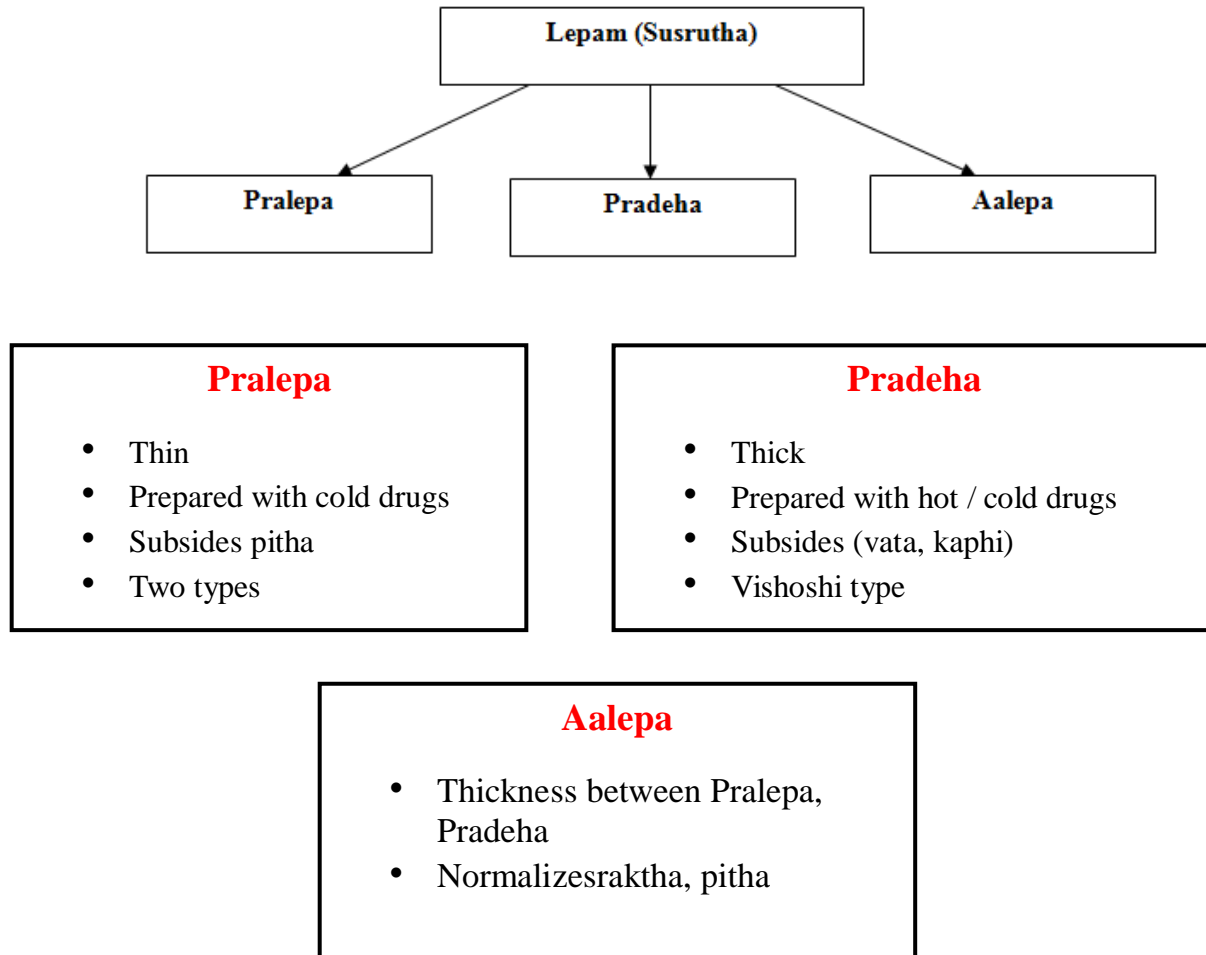
### *Anulepana*

Susrutha has explained the concept of anulepana<sup>[3]</sup> It is the after paste of bathing. He has mentioned that anulepana provides charm, complexion, cheerfulness, energy, strength. It eliminates the foul smell, sweat and any defects of complexion and fatigue

### *Lepas - Acne*

The teen years are filled with angst and last thing a teen would want is acne. These tiny hormonal imbalances can cause a teen to lose sleep for days. Ayurveda has provided a cure for this tiny frustrating problem. (Table 4)

**Figure 1: Types of Lepa**



**Lepas - Wrinkles**

Wrinkles are folds, ridges or creases on the skin that tend to develop as people get older. A wrinkle on face is not a welcome affair. There are not many successful treatment options which are affordable. People have to console themselves saying wrinkles are the signs of wisdom. Classical ayurvedic texts list few lepas (Table 5) which are effective in this condition.

**Lepas – Striae\_Gravidarum (Kikisarogam)**

Motherhood is the crown of femininity. But the process of motherhood or pregnancy brings about many not so pleasurable changes to the women’s body. One among them is the stretch marks or striae gravidarum. They can be

removed cosmetically. Ayurveda deals this problem as kikisa and various lepas are mentioned (Table 6) for its removal.

**Lepas – Fissure Foot**

Fissure foot is a major problem caused by ill fitting footwear and hot climate. This may even make the person immobile and lead to acute agony. The person may detest the sight of his foot. Ayurvedic lepas which help to cure this disorder are listed below. (Table 7)

**Lepas – Correction of Scar Tissue**

Scars are visible signs that remain after a wound has healed and can sometimes be a disturbing reminder of the distress the person has undergone.

**Table 1: Varnya Lepas**

Lepa	Reference
Raktacandanaadi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.32/17
Yavaadi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.32/25-26
Lodhradimukhalepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/11
Gorochanadi lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/11
Matulungaadi lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/10
Haritakiyaadianga raga lepa <sup>[3]</sup>	Su.Ch.25/43
Laakshaadimahasnehalepa <sup>[3]</sup>	Su.Ch.25/38-42
Jaatiphalaadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/47

**Table 2: Combination of Drugs for Mukhalepa in Different Seasons**

Season	Drugs
Hemanta	Cotyledon of kola, root of vrisha, bark of shaabara, gourasarshapa
Shishira	Root of simhi,tila, krshna,bark of daarvi, dehuskedyava
Vasanta	Root of darbha,hima, ushira,sirisha,mishi,tandula
Greeshma	kumuda, utpala, kalhara (lotus) durva, , madhuka,candana
Varsha	Kaliyaka, tila, ushira, mamsi, tagara, padmaka
Sharath	Talisa, gundra, pundrahva, yasti, kasa, nata, aguru

**Table 3: Analogy of Lepa Effects**

Lepa	Simile
Masuraadi lepa	Petals of lotus
Kaaliyakaadi lepa	Moon
Yavaadi lepa	Gold
Rakshognaadi lepa	Rising moon
Sharapunkhadi lepa	Lotus

**Table 4: Lepas for Acne**

Lepa	Reference
Matulungaadi lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/10
Lodhradi lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/11
Gorochanadi lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/11
Vatapatraadi lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/14-15
Rodhradi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As. H.U.32/3
Yavaadi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.32/25-26
Kushtadi lepa <sup>[1]</sup>	C.Su.3/8-9
Vachaadi lepa <sup>[3]</sup>	Su.Ch.20/37
Dhanyakaadi lepa <sup>[3]</sup>	Su.Ch.20/37

**Table 5: Lepas for Vali (Wrinkles)**

Lepa	Reference
Priyaaladi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/39
Laakshaadimahasneha lepa <sup>[3]</sup>	Su.Ch.25/38-42

Scars on the exposed parts of the body can have a negative effect on the appearance, confidence, self esteem and social acceptance of the affected individual. Ayurvedic lepas which are effective in this condition are discussed below. (Table 8)

### **LEPAS FOR HAIR PROBLEMS**

Hair is a marvellous structural entity serving different functions in different parts of the body.

- Scalp hair is a buffer zone and protects vital centers of the head
- Eye lashes, eyebrows, mustache, hairs inside nostril acts as a filter against flying particles
- Axillary hair protects from friction
- Body hair is a heat conservative
- Hair also serves as a sensory organ and perceives touch

But people consider the hair only for decorative purposes.

#### ***Lepas - Baldness***

Baldness or androgenic alopecia as the western medicine names is a condition that hampers not only beauty but also self confidence of an individual .people have gone to extremes to find a cure to this disease not just today but since time immemorial.

In early Egypt, where premature balding was considered as a punishment from god, goat dung was rubbed on the scalp. Since goats never lose their hair, this method was believed to convince God that the person was actually a goat!

Ayurvedic texts have mentioned numerous lepas for baldness. (Table 9) This disease is addressed as khalitya (baldness) in Ayurveda.

#### ***Lepas – Greying of Hair***

Greying of hair is one of the much dreaded signs of aging. But in our present day, due to high stress levels and pollution levels, it affects even the younger lot. It has become a concern for thousands of people, men and women alike. This disorder also called as Canities is due to defective production of melanin pigment produced by our hair follicles. Deficiency of vitamin B12, thyroid problems and genetics are some other causes. Table 10 lists the lepas effective for curing grey hairs. Table 11 mentions the lepa effective in treating brown hair. Table 12 shows the lepas for improving hair color.

#### ***Lepas - Hair Growth***

Hair loss is a problem of considerable proportions of our society. For many people losing hair can be a blow to their self esteem and they may throw away lots of money just to save their hair. There are few lepa preparations that help to combat hair loss and promote hair growth. (Table 13)

#### ***Lepa – Hair Removal***

Unwanted body hair has been a problem particularly for women for many decades. People are compelled to get rid of unwanted hair mainly because of their social anxieties rather than the inconvenience caused by the hairs. The Table 14 enumerates lepas for hair removal.

#### ***Lepas - Dandruff***

Dandruff affects aesthetic value and causes itching. It is one of the most commercially exploited skin diseases. Treatment of dandruff resolves both aesthetic and psychological issues. Table 15 shows lepas effective in darunaka (dandruff).

**Table 6: Lepas for Stretch marks in Pregnancy**

Lepa	Reference
Candanaadi lepa <sup>[1]</sup>	C.Vi.8/31
Shirishadi lepa <sup>[1]</sup>	C.Vi.8/31
Kutajaadi lepa <sup>[1]</sup>	C.Vi.8/31
Triphalaadi lepa <sup>[1]</sup>	C.Vi.8/31
Nimbaadi lepa <sup>[1]</sup>	C.Vi.8/31

**Table 7: Lepas for Vaipaadika (Crack Foot)**

Lepa	Reference
Madhuchistaadi lepa <sup>[3]</sup>	Su.Ch.20/20
Laakshaadimahasnehalepa <sup>[3]</sup>	Su.Ch.25/38-42
Gudaadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/14
Sarjarasaadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/15
Upodhikaadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/16

**Table 8: Lepas used in the correction of scar tissue**

Lepa	Purpose	Name of the procedure
Lauhadi lepa	Blackening of white scar	Krishnikarana
Bhallatakadi lepa	Whitening of black scar	Pandu karana
Rohiniphalalepa		
Kapalikachooradi lepa		
Kapithaadi lepa	Promotion of healthy skin over vrana	Ropana
Manashilaadi lepa		
Kaliyakaadi lepa		
Dhyamakaadi lepa	Restoration of original colour of skin	Varnya
Hemaadi lepa	Restoration of hair growth	Roma rohana
Chathuspadatwakaadi lepa		
Kadaliyaadi lepa	Removal of hair over wounds	Roma apaharna

**Table 9: Lepas for Baldness**

Lepa	Reference
Kasisaadi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/28
Vanyaadi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/29
Gunja lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/29
Langali lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/29
Tilapushpadi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/29
Hastidantamasi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/31
Malatiyaadi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/24
Yashtimadhuaadi lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/23
Roma sanjanana lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/25
Bhallatakaadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/64
Marichaadi lepa <sup>[3]</sup>	Su.Ch.20/26
Devadaruadi lepa <sup>[3]</sup>	Su.Ch.20/26

**Table 10: Lepa for greying of hair**

Lepa	Reference
Dugdikaadi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/38
Ayorajaadi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/42
Dhaatriphalaadi lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/28-29
Triphalaadi lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/30
Daadimaadi lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/31-34
Rasanjanaadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/78
Lohaaamalakaadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/79

**Table 11: Lepa for hariloma (brownish hair)**

Lepa	Reference
Priyaaladi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/39

**Table 12: Lepa for kesharanjana (hair dye)**

Lepa	Reference
Tilaadi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/40
Maashadi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/43
Lohabhasmaadi lepa <sup>[1]</sup>	C.Ch.26/280-282
Lohatriphalaadi lepa <sup>[1]</sup>	C.Ch.26/280-282
Utpalaadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/74
Bhringapushpaadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/75-77

**Table 13: Lepas to improve hair growth**

Lepa	Reference
Tilaadi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/40
Mamsiyaadi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/41
Yashtimadhuaadi lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/23
Madhukaadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/68
Triphalaadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/69
Dhatryaadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/70

**Table 14: Lepas for hair removal**

Lepa	Reference
Shankhabhasmaadi lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/35
Harataalabhasmaadi lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/38
Rakthaanjanipuchalepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/170
Palaashaadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/171
Harataalalepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/168
Shankhakadalilepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/169

**Table 15: Lepas for Dandruff cure**

Lepa	Reference
Priyaaladi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/26
Lakshaadi lepa <sup>[2]</sup>	As.H.U.24/27
Khakhasabijalepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/19
Amrabijaadi lepa <sup>[4]</sup>	Sh.U.11/19
Piyaalabijaadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/58
Maashadi lepa <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/58
Nilautpalaadi <sup>[5]</sup>	B.R.60/59



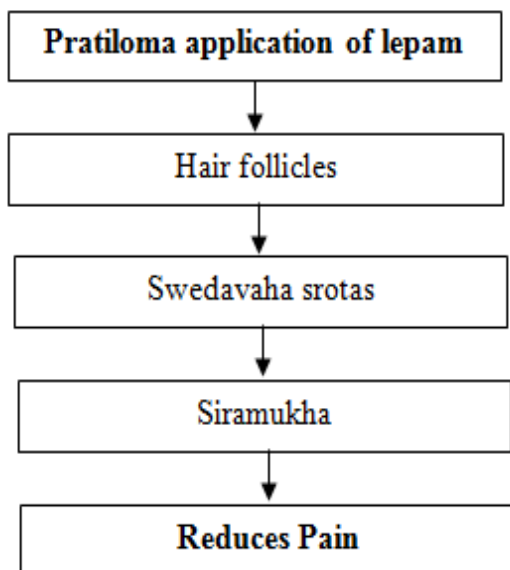
## DISCUSSION

Ayurvedic chikitsa (treatment) can be put under two categories – External treatment (Bahirparimarjana chikitsa) and internal treatment (Antahparimarjana chikitsa). Internal treatment suffers from a few drawbacks such as patient incompatibility due to taste, form of presentation and systemic effects. The External treatments can overcome some of these constraints. External treatments have localized effects and can be presented in attractive forms. Lepa kalpana is one of the external treatment modalities in Ayurveda. Lepas are prescribed as primary treatment for twak vikaras (skin diseases) and vranam. They have great potential in cosmetic treatments also because of their localised effects. Ayurveda is a treasure trove of knowledge in the field of cosmetology.

### Lepa - Pharmacological Action

Lepas should be applied against the direction of hair follicles. This facilitates the easy absorption of lepa (Su. Su. 18/4) [3] and its pharmacological action is enhanced. The Flowchart 1 demonstrates the pharmacological action of lepa.

**Flowchart 1: Pharamacological Action of Lepa**



Pitha situated in skin namely braajaka pitham absorbs the drugs applied externally in the form of massage, bath, pastes. It is also responsible for various shades of complexion. (Su. Su. 21/10)<sup>[3]</sup>

### Lepa – Merits and Demerits

#### Merits

- Lepas adhere well to the skin forming a thick coat that protects and soothes inflamed and raw surfaces of skin.
- It exhibits local action, minimizes damage done by scratching in itchy conditions
- It reduces sensitivity reactions as they are confined to a particular area
- They are emollient because of their powdered content, porous.
- Easy to apply as it is less greasy

#### Demerits

- Cannot be used to cure in emergency conditions
- More expensive and very less shelf-life

## CONCLUSION

From being treated with suspicion, Ayurveda has progressed to the sate of being welcomed by the general public. This is especially true in the field of cosmetology. The knowledge of lepas if utilized properly will become a great assert for the society since people have developed affinity to anything natural. But the cosmetic industry while marketing its products has been pedalling many half truths and myths in their campaign. This has resulted in disbelief and disloyalty among the consumers about its products. The members of Ayurvedic fraternity have the responsibility to propagate the right knowledge to the public. This article is a step in this direction for achieving the mission.



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